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THE

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MODERN CURATE

MARRIED
UNMARRIED
POPULAR
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HIS SERMONS
HIS MISERABLE PROSPECTS

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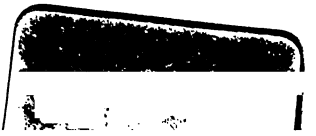


The Modern Curate.

MARRIED.

UNMARRIED.

POPULAR.

UNPOPULAR.

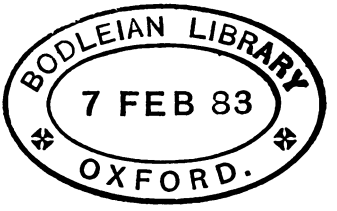
HIS SERMONS.

HIS MISERABLE PROSPECTS.

London:
W. SKEFFINGTON & SON, 163, PICCADILLY.

1881.

These Papers have already attracted much attention in the pages of "The Graphic," and are now reprinted in accordance with a generally expressed desire.



I.

THE MODERN CURATE.

MARRIED.

"THOUGH bachelors be the strongest stakes," says Thomas Fuller, "married men are the best binders, in the hedge of the Commonwealth." Whether this be true or not, there is no doubt that many of the "stakes" would become "binders" if they could. It pays a doctor to marry, as in many cases people will not employ him if he is single; and, according to popular notions, a clergyman gets on all the better in his parish if he takes to himself a wife Provided he is an incumbent, he is better married than single, supposing, of course, that he has an adequate income But a poor curate should be very slow to listen to the promptings of his own affections, or the good-natured advice of friends who advise him to marry. Like other men he may wish to become a "binder

in the hedge of the Commonwealth," and, if he does, he will not find any difficulty in doing so. For some young women are to be met with in every parish who would, without the slightest hesitation, marry a curate on 150*l.* a year A poor curate need not be an Adonis, a stalwart specimen of muscular Christianity, or an æsthetic devoted to the worship of the Beautiful; he need not be "anything in particular" to induce one of his flock to go to the altar with him. Young women are, unfortunately, only too ready to take penniless young priests "for better or worse," without any misgiving that it may be "for worse" only. They indulge in roseate dreams of rectories, life-long comfort and good social position. They forget that preferment is never certain, that there can be no comfort with a family in a poverty-stricken house, and that good society is rather inclined to give "the cold shoulder" to paupers. The women do not think of these things; the men who marry them, should.

A young curate falls in love with a girl. He knows that she has no money, and no prospects of getting any from parents or other relatives. He is in a similar position himself. His income is 150*l.* when he holds a *good* curacy. His preferment

depends on the reputation he may make for himself, as he has no promise of a living, nor any friends able to present him to one. He has hopes. He is young, earnest, and popular. He seeks the society of the girl, does his best to win her love, succeeds, proposes, and is accepted. They put their heads together, and lover-like prattle about the happiness in store for them. They quote Scripture to settle any doubts they may have about the future being provided for, supposing that they have children. They are married. Then stern reality begins.

The curate usually finds out that his wife knows nothing about housekeeping. She can take a class in a Sunday School, but she cannot teach a servant how to boil a potato. He finds that her accomplishments do not go beyond the piano playing or singing he has listened to, and the execution of some water-colours, perhaps, which he has criticised with a lover's judgment. As the manager of a slender income he finds her sadly wanting. He has done what many clergymen have done before him—married a woman only fitted to be a rich man's wife. It would be reasonable to suppose that clergymen with small incomes would select thrifty, sensibly-educated girls for

their partners. Some do, the majority do not. This is a well-known fact, but it is not easy to give any explanation why it should be so. Clergymen seem to have a *penchant* for marrying useless women. Anyone connected with a society for assisting the families of poor clergymen can furnish ample testimony to prove the truth of this assertion. But let us suppose that the poor curate marries a thrifty although penniless girl. His condition is not very much improved. His wife's management may make his income go a little further than it would do in the hands of a less competent woman; but the most careful management will not make an income that is barely sufficient for one, do for two. The age of miracles is past, but, to judge from the marriages they make, some of the clergy would seem to expect the advent of an Elijah to succour them in the trouble brought upon them by their own folly. What is the poor married curate to do?

Unless he goes to some very objectionable place where the incumbent is forced to offer more than the usual stipend, he cannot get more than 150*l.* a year He has no other means of increasing his income; hard work will not do it. He may, perhaps, earn a few pounds by writing, but very

few clergymen, curates especially, have time for literary work, while fewer still have the ability. Many in despair try to dispose of their sermons.

"We are almost overwhelmed with offers of sermons for publication in the——, or in the form of separate volumes, and are, of course, unable to accept or even entertain a twentieth part of the manuscripts offered to us," writes the head of a well-known firm in London. Every week his letter-box bears testimony to the efforts made by poor clergymen to earn money by sermon writing. An experienced writer, if he gets a publisher to take his MSS., cannot make much by his sermons; a curate without a name, except in the rarest cases, can make nothing.

Some clergymen increase their income by tuition. They either have pupils who reside with them, or who come to their rooms as day boys. But if the poor married curate thinks of becoming a tutor, he finds out very soon that there is not much chance of his succeeding. Pupils are very hard to get either in town or country. The people who are able to afford private tuition for their sons always secure the services of a resident tutor, or in some cases a non-resident tutor, who has no other occupation to interfere with his

duties. Then there are so many small, cheap schools conducted by clever University men, as well as by experienced ladies, that parents prefer to send their sons to them instead of asking the local clergy to undertake their education. A few years ago, before railway travelling made it possible for boys just out of the nursery to be sent about alone, parents were forced to educate their children at home; thus the clergy were often requisitioned as tutors. In those days, too, the clergy had more time at their disposal. Their churches were shut during the week. They had no Bible classes, teachers' meetings, or Guilds to attend to, no systematic parish work to keep them busily employed. But *nous avons changè tout cela.* A curate now, married or unmarried, has very little spare time, unless he has the good fortune to live in a parish where there are few poor. So that tuition can give little or no help to the poverty-stricken parson.

Failing to earn something by literary work or tuition, the poor married curate has no other resource but—to beg.

He does not ask for money, he begs its equivalent. When he hears of a vacant living he writes to the patron, sets forth his poverty, and asks, for

the sake of his poor wife and children that his application may be favourably considered. By degrees his finer susceptibilities are blunted, and at last he has no hesitation in begging boldly and persistently As his children grow up, he begs hard for their admittance into charity schools. He has to put up with the humilation of having food and bundles of cast-off clothing left at his door by people who take pity on him. As his family increases to the proverbial quiverfull that falls to the lot of the clergy, his difficulties increase until they culminate in the loss of his curacy.

A poor married curate can never expect to stay long in one place. He must get into debt with the tradesmen. His Vicar hears of it, and soon comes to the conclusion that he must get rid of his married curate at any cost. This is easily done, and the miserable man, with his wife and children, is obliged to move, and attempt a fresh start in a new parish. But wherever he goes the same difficulties beset him His poverty is soon known, his unpaid bills become the talk of the parish. Dissenters sneer at the scandal caused by a clergyman, and, at last, if the Vicar does not take any steps to get rid of him, the members of his congregation express their dissatisfaction in terms

that leave him no choice but to seek a new curate So much unpleasantness has been caused in various parts of the country by these pauper clergyman and their families, that numbers of incumbents take care when they advertise for a curate to state distinctly that they require an unmarried man. I may mention here, however, that there exists, to a great extent, among the beneficed clergy a prejudice against married curates. The chief reason, of course, is that they are, as a rule, without means. But another reason is that modern curates frequently marry women who have not been accustomed to good society. Unfortunately the social standing of the clergy is not what it was, so that it is very possible for a vicar to find that his curate's wife is not the kind of person with whom his wife and daughters care to associate. Clergymen's wives and daughters, it may be said, should welcome curates and their wives to their family circles from a sense of duty, whether they are their social inferiors or not. This is very true, but the families of many clergymen will not subject themselves to any such unpleasantness, so the simple expedient is adopted of securing the services of unmarried curates. But even supposing that the curate is a gentleman and

his wife a lady, unless he has great tact, he will not always find that the most perfect concord can be kept up between his house and the Vicarage. The Vicar's wife and the curate's wife are more often antagonistic than bosom friends.

It is a pity that this should be so, but we must take the world as we find it, and so in the present state of affiairs a married curate, even with private means, will not find that he can keep "the even tenor of his way so easily as his unmarried brother can.

For a man in any profession, in any station of life, marriage is a serious undertaking, but, of all men, curates have the most need to think twice before they commit themselves to such a step. As I have pointed out, they get into the most miserable difficulties when they marry on nothing but a curate's scanty pay. A man in any other profession can hide his poverty from the eyes of the world. He can live with his family in retirement and remain unknown and unnoticed. It makes no difference to his principal whether he is poor or not. With the clergyman the case is different. His position as a public man makes retirement an impossibility. He cannot be unknown, and he cannot keep his family affairs to himself. So he has the misery of

knowing that his poverty is a subject of common talk among his parishioners. But he has himself alone to blame for his position. People cannot help feeling some pity for him, but he deserves none. No man in possession of his faculties is ignorant of the cost of living, and the curate who has no income but his stipend must know perfectly well that it is not enough to keep two people, much less servants and children. He must know when he marries a girl without a penny that he will have to find a home for her on the same income that has only just kept himself in clothes, food, and lodgings. He must know that there is no increase of stipend given to a curate on his marriage. He must know that the possession of a wife does not give a clergyman any special claim on Bishops or other patrons. Indeed, a well-known Bishop has lately stated in public that it is no recommendation to him for a living, if a clergyman tells him that he is a poor man with a wife and family The Bishop is quite right. No man is justified in marrying and bringing children into the world without a prospect of supporting them. The penniless curate who marries a penniless girl, whose sentimental dreams of "love in a cottage" may be excused in consideration of a woman's

weakness, cannot be too severely condemned. Silly fools may find excuses for him, and say that "it is very hard that he cannot marry the girl he loves, if he likes;" but all sensible men and women must acknowledge that it is harder still for a poor loving girl to be lured away from her home, and started on a life-long struggle with blighting, accursed poverty. It is the man who is to blame. Thoughtless, selfish—he is nothing better—to bring a girl who trusts him to misery and want, instead of leaving her free, or if he has engaged himself to her, honestly telling her that he will set her free from her engagement unless she likes to wait until he has a real home to offer her. It is no proof of love to marry a girl without the means of giving her the ordinary necessaries of life. Men cannot help falling in love, nor can they guard against girls forming attachments for them, but we maintain that they can and should refrain from contracting improvident marriages. A curate has, no doubt, many temptations to marry, as owing to his position, he is, perhaps, thrown into contact with women much more than laymen are. But if he cannot marry sensibly, let him resist those temptations as it is his duty to do. Let him remain a bachelor, and deny himself a desire that

he cannot gratify without injuring another. Let him practice self-denial. It is very hard, we all know, that the clergy are so miserably paid that they cannot afford to marry in so many instances, but under existing circumstances the path of duty for the poor curate is plainly marked. If this path were followed by all poor men who take orders we should not hear such piteous tales of broken-down clergymen out of employment, of their unfortunate wives prematurely aged, and killed by suffering and want; of their children starving; of their daughters being forced to go out into the world and earn their bread as they best can. There must always be poor curates among our clergy, but there need not be large families brought into the world by them to increase the huge army "*les miserables.*"

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But there are not many young curates who are thus situated. The modern curate is rarely a man of money. Those who take Orders with Oxford and Cambridge or Dublin degrees are not all men who have private means; the income which keeps men at College is not always settled on them for life. Scores take their B.A. degree without a penny in their pockets, and without a chance of getting anything afterwards, except what they can make by their own exertions. This is especially the case with men who take their degrees with a view to Ordination. While they are keeping terms and paying exorbitant sums in fees and kitchen expenses, their people at home manage to provide the funds. The strain on their resources is only for a limited time; they know this, and make the sacrifice; to continue it would be out of their power.

Thus it happens that the majority of modern curates have no fixed income except their stipend. For his first year's labour the young deacon gets from 120*l.* to 140*l.* As soon as he is in Priest's Orders he gets an additional 10*l.* After that he may labour for years as a curate without having

this slender stipend increased by even a five-pound note. He may devote all his time, his thought, and his bodily vigour to his parish work; he may be recognised, and complimented as an able and zealous priest; but he cannot obtain an increase of stipend so long as he remains a curate. There is no fund, nor any disposition to provide one, to increase his meagre pittance. He must be content with that he hath, and think himself fortunate if by dint of scheming and cheeseparing he can keep out of debt. It used to be said some years ago that a clergyman was the only man who could afford to wear a shabby coat. If this ever were true it is not true now. Society refuses to consort with shabby garments, and of all men the clergy are the very last who can publicly air their faded broadcloth. A curate must be as presentable as his vicar if he wishes to mix in the social gatherings of the well-housed members of his flock. The tailor's bill of the modern curate is therefore a serious item in his yearly expenses; and no man can afford to go to a cheap tailor, inasmuch as the clothes purchased at low prices wear as badly as they fit.

Then as regards lodging. In some parts of the country a man may get very fair accommodation at

a moderate rental, but in many parishes, town and suburban ones especially, he is forced to pay far more than he can really afford. Sometimes he literally has no choice. He must live within a reasonable distance from his church, and so is often compelled to occupy lodgings which are beyond his means.

As far as his daily bread is concerned he can, it is true, live economically, in fact, he is forced to do so; but living alone in lodgings is not the cheapest way of living, as all who have tried the experiment know perfectly well.

It is part of his business to read. As he is responsible for one or more sermons every week he must store his mind from the riches of other men's learning. Thus he requires books and new works from time to time. These he cannot afford to buy. Theological works cannot be bought like novels for a few pence. Standard authors such as he needs are not issued in cheap editions, so he is forced to long for them in vain, and the purchase of a book of any value is an event to be chronicled in his diary.

Now and then the modern curate may receive a present of a book—a volume of sermons, a copy of the "Priest's Prayer-book," or some cheap devo-

tional work. The laity seem unable to conceive that the poor curates of their parishes would be very grateful for the occasional gift of some really useful book. They take it for granted that a clergyman always has as many books as he wants.

But the commonest delusion about the modern curate is that he is always getting presents. We read in novels about the presents of slippers, silk cassocks, embroidered stoles, and other things, such as game and cigars, that the curate of a parish gets from his people. There could be no more mistaken notion. As a rule the modern curate gets nothing from the members of his congregation except a little hospitality—and not always that. If the curate is known to be a reading man, it would be a delicate attention to present him at Christmas or some such time with a nice edition of some standard work; or if he has a taste for science, with a good microscope; or if he is an amateur mechanic, with some little addition to his workshop But such presents are very rarely made, for every one takes it as a matter of course that the curate, whatever his tastes and pursuits may be, has all that he can desire. There is no secret about the amount of his stipend; anyone who takes the

trouble can find out exactly what his yearly income is, whether he has private means, whether he has friends to help him or not. In some few, but very few places there has been instituted an offertory once a year for the curate attached to the church. Perhaps in time this help from the congregation may be more generally given to the curate. But the very fact of such an offertory having been instituted in the few places where it *is* the custom, shows very plainly that some portion of the laity, at least, consider that their assistant clergy are badly and underpaid. It has been urged, and more than once, in the columns of the Press, that more men and better men would devote their lives to the ministry if they were sure of receiving adequate pay. Certain enthusiasts have often tried to contradict this statement by urging that the work of the ministry is its own reward, and that the great barrier to Ordination is the cost of a University degree. But these objectors fail to take into consideration the great number of graduates who leave their colleges every year for professions in which hard work and energy may hope for, if not ensure, proportionate remuneration. The modern curate's only chance is a living. The diaconate, however, is merely a step,

not the key to a benefice. A man may remain a curate from the day he preaches his first sermon to the hour when old and feeble he preaches his last.

Men know this, and such knowledge naturally deters them from following the inclination they may have to take Orders. No man likes to contemplate the possibility of giving the work of a lifetime for 150*l.* a year at the most, besides remaining in a subordinate position, and being liable to dismissal at three months' notice. Moreover, the offer of a living does not in all cases mean the offer of a fair stipend. Some livings are not worth taking by a man who has no private means, and it is well known that if a man accepts the offer of a small living his chances of preferment are more remote than ever. Patrons overlook him, considering that he is already properly provided for and perfectly content to remain where he is. Thus the modern curate is often compelled to refuse the offer of a small living, lest he should remain a poor vicar for the rest of his life—and a poor vicar is in a worse position than a poor curate He has his independence, it is true, but he has it at the cost of increased mental and bodily wear.

Then, as the modern curate gets on to "the sere and yellow leaf," patrons give him the cold shoulder. They reason that if he has served his Church so many years without having had his services rewarded, there must, perforce, be something against him, hence the reiterated complaint that young men are preferred over the heads of their elders. Thus we see the modern curate on the horns of a dilemma. He must take the first living that is offered to him, be it ever so poor, and thus lose his chance of a really good post; or he must refuse it, and so run the risk of never attaining to the social status of an incumbent.

The modern curate may imagine during the first years of his ministry that he would not much care to change places with his vicar. He knows what his responsibilities are, what worries he has, and what constant demands are made upon his time and his purse. He knows that the vicar has many cares and anxieties from which he, the curate, is perfectly free He knows that the vicar is virtually tied to the parish in which he resides, and that he cannot leave it if it does not suit him, while the curate can without much difficulty pick and choose his parish, suiting his own taste as to locality and people. But as he grows older he

finds that his position as curate is not so pleasant as it was. He begins to find his subordinate place somewhat uncomfortable, his prejudices stronger, and a growing desire for independence. If he is about the same age as his vicar, or older, as is sometimes the case, a want of harmony must sooner or later be felt on both sides. Usually a vicar prefers his curate to be a very much younger man than himself. There are cases where two men of about the same age work together as vicar and curate with perfect unanimity, but such cases are rare. So that after the lapse of years the modern curate finds a difficulty in getting a curacy, and remaining in one when he has got an appointment. It is, therefore, no wonder that the time should come when a curate wishes to be a vicar himself. His former objections disappear. The once appreciated independence of a curate's position resolves itself into an irksome subordination, in exchange for which he would gladly undertake all the responsibilities of an incumbency. He lives, then, in the hope of preferment, and when hope is deferred year after year, he becomes a disappointed man, and as such he is, to a certain extent, unfitted for his duties.

Much would be done to remedy this source of

harm to the Church if some provision were made to increase the stipendiary curate's pay, according to his length of service, in somewhat the same way that the pay of an army chaplain is increased. If the Church were more generous to her paid servants, she would be better served, and, what is of great importance, better supported.

III.

THE MODERN CURATE.

POPULAR.

"You are very popular with the people already," said a plain spoken lady to a young deacon who had hardly been a month in his first curacy. She was a Sunday School teacher and a district visitor, and had, therefore, every opportunity of hearing the opinions generally expressed about the new curate.

He, naturally, was surprised at finding himself popular with the people who had not had time to make his acquaintance, and who had only seen him a few times in the pulpit. But the simple explanation of the matter was, that the people had taken a fancy to him, and made up their minds, as soon as they saw him, that they would like him. There are some clergyman who are fortunate enough to make what is termed "a good impres-

sion" upon people, as soon as they enter a parish. Thus they start with very much in their favour. Instead of having to win the goodwill of their parishioners, all they have to do is to take care not to lose it. First impresions are not easily altered, so that the curate whose appearance, manner and first sermon make a favourable impression upon the members of his congregation has a very much better chance of being popular than a better man who does not create a good impression on his first appearance. A curate's popularity does not always depend upon his worth.

A thoroughly Christian and estimable young man may be misunderstood, coldly received, and even disliked by his parishioners. To use a common expression, "they may not take to him." Thus he starts with their prejudices against him, with a barrier between himself and their affections, which nothing but time and the nicest tact on his part can break down. There are men who have settled down in parishes under such disadvantages, and who have yet won their way, quietly and surely with the people, until they have come to be esteemed by rich and poor alike.

But although there are some curates who grasp

popularity at the outset of their clerical life, and retain it, and although there are others who have the misfortune as soon as they enter a parish to create a most unfavourable impression upon all with whom they come into contact, it may be laid down, as a general rule, that curates cannot be called popular or unpopular until they have had time enough to settle down to their work, and become well acquainted with the poor and the well-to-do members of the congregation.

A curate cannot be popular unless he is a gentleman. It has been suggested more than once that the staff of assistant clergy might be increased if men of a lower social position than those usually ordained were prepared in theological colleges, and accepted by our Bishops as candidates for Holy Orders. To a certain extent the plan has been tried, but, so far, there is nothing to encourage any further development of the scheme. The results of teaching men, who by no stretch of imagination can be called gentlemen, to work as parish priests, has been most unsatisfactory and decidedly detrimental to the popularity of the clergy as a body With such men the upper classes, naturally, will have no association. They cannot invite men to their houses who are ignorant

of the common usages of society, and who, they know from experience, may at any moment be guilty of some unpardonable *gaucherie* Further, to say that such men will be popular with the poor is to display a very great ignorance of the feelings and characteristics of the working-classes. No one is better able than the poor man to detect the difference between the curate who is a gentleman and one who is not. A curate has little or no chance of being received in a friendly spirit by the poor of his parish unless he has the instincts and manners of a gentleman. There should be no difference between his behaviour in a peasant's cottage and a lady's drawing-room. "The true gentleman—much more the Christian minister—is tested by courtesy and kindness to the artizan and the poor. These points may seem to be trifles. But they tell. They will be long remembered. The working classes and the poor feel them keenly."

This extract from the writings of a late eminent Canon, who had much experience in large parishes, bears witness to the fact that experienced clergymen recognise the importance of having gentlemen to assist them in their parish work. When the curate is said to be popular among the poor, it will always be found that he is kind,

courteous, and gentlemanly in his intercourse with them.

It would, however, be quite impossible to find a curate in any parish who could be spoken of as universally popular. The most a curate can hope for, supposing popularity is worth having, is to be liked by the majority of his parishioners. The patience of a Job, the wisdom of a Solomon, and the preaching powers of a St. Paul would never qualify any living man to please every member of a modern congregation. To a certain extent, the popularity of the modern curate depends upon his preaching. If he bores his people every time he occupies the pulpit, with a laboriously arranged selection of texts and platitudes, he will at length cause most of his hearers to devoutly wish that Providence had assigned him another sphere of usefulness. At the same time, it must not be supposed that a poor preacher can never be a popular curate. Some of the curates most successful in winning the affections of their people have been, and are, men whose preaching lacks power, originality, and interest. But it is an undeniable advantage for a curate to be a good preacher. People are more ready to forgive his failings if he can keep their attention and interest

them during the time that he is prominently placed before them in the pulpit. Taking all things into consideration, the High Church curate has the best chance of becoming a favourite with his people, whether they are rich or poor. He acts on the advice of the good old Bishop Hacket, and "serves God cheerfully." He does not look upon life as a gloomy pilgrimage to the grave. He does not, with the bigotry of his Evangelical brother, condemn harmless amusements as pitfalls laid by Satan to catch all who stray from the Evangelical fold. He joins the social gatherings of his friends, does his best to make himself agreeable, and yet is always careful not to give those whom he meets any occasion to say that his demeanour is unclerical. Further, it will generally be found that the popular curate is an athlete, and able to take part in the summer and winter recreations of his parishioners. There are still many Puritanical people who never hesitate to condemn a clergyman if he takes a bat in his hand, dons a football jersey, joins a boat club, or forms one of a four at lawn tennis. But there is no reason whatever why a man should give up such harmless and healthy recreations after he has taken Orders. His presence on the cricket field

or with his football team is calculated to do much good. There is no lack of testimony to prove how great benefits have resulted from a clergyman becoming a member of his parish cricket and football clubs. By keeping aloof from the outdoor sports in which clergymen are able to take part without reproach, a curate does not gain any credit to himself. The young men of his parish regard him as a muff, and his influence over them is lessened accordingly. A curate, like other men, needs exercise and occasional relaxation. He cannot do better, therefore, than join the clubs in his parish, and do his best to eradicate the pernicious idea that manliness and religion cannot be united.

When a popular curate is depicted in *Punch*, or any of the comic journals, he is invariably placed in the midst of a bevy of ladies. To be a ladies' man, to be the pampered pet of the boudoir, to be the idol of the Sunday School Teachers, is the aim of some curates. This unhealthy popularity, so often sought after, and so justly satirised, is the most dangerous popularity that a curate can have. It does him much harm, and no good. He degenerates into a clerical flirt. As such he brings discredit on his calling, and does more to damage

the influence of the Church than all the attacks of the Liberationists can ever do Outside the circle of his feminine admirers he is regarded with contempt People speak of him as a man who has mistaken his vocation. He may gain the popularity he covets, but he does so at the expense of his reputation with all the members of his congregation, whose good opinion is worth having.

IV.

THE MODERN CURATE.

UNPOPULAR.

A BISHOP, now living, was entertaining some candidates for ordination. One of them during an interval between the examination hours strolled into the Bishop's private study, and finding no one there, made himself comfortable before the fire. Some time after the Bishop himself came into the room, and was astounded, as well he might have been, at the sight before him. The would-be deacon was seated in a chair placed in front of the fireplace. The chair was tipped back to enable its occupant to put his feet against the chimney-piece There he sat with his head thrown back, comfortably smoking a dirty clay pipe! This is a fact, and it illustrates a remark made in the last paper that all the men who present themselves for Holy Orders are not gentlemen. A man who could

commit such an unpardonable *gaucherie* in a gentleman's house, to say nothing of the fact of its being his Bishop's Palace, is not fit to be admitted into the society of refined people. Yet such men are constantly ordained now, and the consequence is that the number of unpopular curates is far larger than it need be. The majority of unpopular curates are men who, through no fault of their own in many cases, do not know how to conduct themselves when they are in the society of ladies and gentlemen. There is a homely old proverb about "a silk purse" and a "sow's ear." To apply it in this case, it may be said that if a young man has not had the training of a gentleman in other things beside his school work, it is impossible to make a gentleman out of him after his ordination. He is perfectly certain to do something to offend the susceptibilities of the people he meets; and when the members of a congregation find that their curate is a man whom they cannot invite to their houses—such is human nature—they dislike him, and wish that a more popular man could take his place.

It is no uncommon thing now to hear people say that they cannot invite the curate to their houses because his manners and conversation are

objectionable. A man may not behave like the candidate for orders did in the Bishop's house: he may not take off his heavy boots and put on a pair of gaudy slippers in his hostess's drawing-room, as a curate did not long ago at a dinner party, still he may from ignorance of etiquette, and from a want of gentlemanly feeling, make it impossible for people to ask him to meet their friends, or to dine with them *en famille.*

When this is the case it is not surprising that the curate is quietly ignored, and spoken of, when his name is mentioned, as an unpopular man. Still it by no means follows that a curate must be popular if he is a gentleman by birth, and has had the education of a gentleman. In the ranks of the unpopular curates are to be found men of polish and culture. Sometimes it happens that a refined and sensitive man is licensed as curate to a parish where the wealthiest and most influential members of his congregation are people of that class with which a clergyman finds it most difficult to keep on friendly terms. There are no words exactly which can be used to describe this peculiar class of people, but every clergyman who has had any experience knows how touchy they are, and what an amount of tact it requires to avoid giving

them offence. When a new curate comes into their parish, they neither call nor send him an invitation to their houses: they expect him, contrary to all the rules of etiquette, to call first. When, naturally, he does nothing of the kind, they take offence, and tell everyone they meet that the curate is unsociable, and thinks the members of his congregation are not good enough for him to know. So the title-tattle goes on, and the curate is soon talked about as an unpopular man. If by any chance he gets to know people of this class, he finds that they invariably give him a general invitation "to drop in" whenever he likes, as he will always find "a knife and fork" ready for him. It is impossible for him to accept such invitations, so when it is found that he does not "drop in" in a friendly way to visit perfect strangers, the impression is at once formed that the new curate is a reserved man, who objects to making acquaintances. Here and there, perhaps, a curate may be found who deliberately shuns the members of his congregation, but as a rule the modern curate is not only willing but most desirous to get on friendly terms with all the people who attend his church. When he cannot do this, and is unpopular in consequence, it is not his fault, provided, of

course, that he is a gentleman—and acts as one.

Many curates, however, make themselves unpopular in a parish by careless behaviour and want of tact in little things. People are so captious and exacting nowadays that a curate cannot be too careful how he conducts himself in the sight of his parishioners. For instance, it is a great mistake, as a rule, for a curate to dance in his own parish. No one but a Puritanical bigot will say that it is wrong to dance, and no clergymen but those of the extreme Evangelical school refuse to be present at a dance; still it is expedient for a man to give up dancing as soon as he takes Orders. Ladies will waltz with a curate, and will tell him that they do not see why he should not enjoy himself as others do—behind his back, they will, with few exceptions condemn him. Popular opinion is, to a certain extent, against a curate dancing. It does not look well, people say, to see a clergyman dancing a waltz. Such is the general impression, and whether it is right or wrong, curates cannot afford to disregard it. More than one curate has been requested to change the scene of his labours in consequence of his marked attachment to the ball-room Still this is a matter about which a curate must form his own opinions.

Popular opinion is also against a curate dressing like a layman The present Bishop of Bedford, in one of his addresses to candidates for ordination only a year or two ago, cautioned his hearers against this mistake. For there are some curates who make themselves unpopular by going about their parishes in light suits and ties, and pot hats such as laymen wear. There are rectors of country parishes still living who dress exactly like sporting men or farmers, but it does not do for curates to imitate them. A certain amount of latitude is allowed to the curate in the matter of dress. He may wear white ties or Roman collars; short coats or long ones reaching down to his ankles. He may wear a tall hat, or soft wide-awake, or a stiff broad-brimmed hat, with a knotted cord, but whatever the style is, the dress must be black and proclaim the clergyman. A curate should remember that the laity are usually very censorious as far as the clergy are concerned, and think nothing of taking offence at a clergyman's dress which does not satisfy them A curate has been known to give deadly offence in a Low Church parish by wearing a long coat, a broad-brimmed hat, and a cassock and short surplice, while on the other a High Church community has taken offence at what they

term a Protestant costume. The unpopular curate will generally be found to act without the slightest consideration of people's prejudices in this matter. He may say that he does not see why he should not go about in any dress he pleases, and, if he thinks fit, smoke his pipe or cigar when he takes his walks abroad. There is no reason why he should not: for smoking a pipe or wearing a light coat in public breaks no moral law even in a clergyman's case, but public opinion is altogether opposed to anything which secularises the clergy, and public opinion must be considered. The unpopular curate thinks otherwise.

There are some men in Orders who contrive to make themselves unpopular with everyone in the parish, including the vicar, his family, and all the church officials, but as a rule the most unpopular curate finds some few people who can tolerate and even like him. If he has a grievance they sympathise with him, and if that grievance is against the vicar, they very often incite him to form a party in the parish to take his part in opposition to the vicarage. By opposing his vicar and encouraging others to do so a curate oftens sows the seeds of an unpopularity which eventually results in the loss of his curacy. A man cannot

make a greater mistake in whatever parish he may be curate, than the not uncommon one of representing a division in the congregation opposed to the rector or vicar. But young men often do this when they are not quite satisfied with the way in which things are managed in connection with the church. The proper course for a curate to take, when he finds that he cannot work amicably with his vicar, is to resign, and seek a post under a man whose views agree with his own. It is much better for him to do this than run the risk of being sent away with a reputation for mischief-making, which is certain to follow him wherever he goes. Besides, no clergyman can conscientiously recommend a man who has been "a thorn in his flesh" instead of a pleasant fellow-worker, and it is a serious drawback to a man taking a curacy when his late vicar has to sit down and write letters-testimonial for him with a feeling of thankfulness that he is going to be licensed elsewhere. A curate who is dictatorial to his vicar, opposes his wishes, and shows no respect for his authority, seldom gets the reputation of being a popular man, for no one likes to see a curate setting himself up to rule where he is in an entirely subordinate position. A vicar may be very unpopular

himself, and pursue a policy of exasperation towards his parishioners, still it is not his curate's place to correct him.

Some curates, as I observed in the last paper, make themselves the idol of the Sunday School teachers, and thus become very popular with them; others with more wisdom keep on mere friendly terms with them, and avoid that familiarity which so soon springs up between a young curate and some of the young women who "go in" for church work. But the curate who will not chat and flirt with the teachers and the staff of lady decorators, must not expect to be popular with them. They will resent his behaviour, and complain that he is a disagreeable, unsociable man, because he does not seek their society, and, of course, they will call him a misogynist. This kind of unpopularity, however, will never injure any curate. No sensible man will trouble himself because some foolish young women blame him when he will not dance attendance on them in and out of the Sunday School, nor stand to hold flowers and pick leaves for them while they talk scandal and make wreaths for the pulpit.

To be unpopular with such members of his congregation is rather to a curate's credit than

otherwise, for "the ladies' curate" is generally an empty-headed fop, with an overweening opinion of himself and a complacent notion that every girl he meets thinks of him as a possible suitor. A young man of this description seeking a second curacy a few years ago, got a letter from a rector in the Midland counties requesting an interview. The youth wrote back to inquire whether, in the event of his coming, "there would be *some nice young ladies for him to play croquet with!*" He got a reply to his query, which (if he had any sense at all) must have decided him to avoid the mention of such subjects as "croquet" and "nice young "ladies" in his letters to rectors.

As long as a curate behaves as a gentleman should, and does his work quietly and unostentatiously, he will never as a general rule become unpopular in whatever parish he may be placed.

V.

THE MODERN CURATE.

HIS SERMONS.

"You had much better get your failures over here, than make them, by and by, on platforms and in pulpits." This is what Canon Curteis used constantly to say to the students at Lichfield in reference to the weekly debates and the extempore sermons in the Cathedral at the students' services. Every one under his *régime* was expected to take part in the college debates, and, when his turn came, was obliged to preach a short extempore sermon to his fellow students. As may have been expected, some very extraordinary attempts at speaking and preaching were heard in the College Library and Cathedral But many men who are now hard at work in their parishes have much reason to be grateful for the opportunity thus afforded them of getting their failures over *before* their

ordination. As a rule a deacon's first attempt at preaching is made when he gets up to deliver his first sermon. His natural nervousness at finding himself for the first time before a number of upturned faces intently regarding him, has to be overcome by successive appearances before his congregation. So we but rarely hear of a curate who is able to stand up and preach extempore as soon as he begins his clerical work. Indeed the exception is to find a deacon who can go to a cottage meeting and give a few old women an address "without his book," as the country people say. A curate's failures, a curate's practice and experience in preaching are made at the expense of his congregation. He generally feels his painful position keenly, while those who must listen to him feel it far more. But under the existing system of preparation for ordination this want of elocutionary training is the curate's misfortune, not his fault. A man at either Oxford or Cambridge, who intends to take Orders, goes to Divinity lectures, which treat of the history of the Creeds, the critical study of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek, and occasionally of a pastor's work in the parish, but there is no professor of elocution to teach him how to turn his studies to the best advantage in the pulpit. It

seems to be taken for granted that all the candidates for the Ministry are born orators. The results of this glaring fault in their training are not pleasing. Mannerisms which might have been dropped become confirmed. Jerky delivery, monotonous drawling, and indistinct pronunciation become the unfortunate characteristics of numbers of the clergy, through no fault of their own. There are very few clergymen, I once heard Mr. Walter Lacy say, who can read a chapter from the Bible, or preach a sermon, with proper effect. Naturally, this want in the training of the clergy is much noticed, and it is often said that young men who intend to preach should take lessons in elocution. They would gladly, if they had the chance, and thoroughly understood the importance of such training. But how are they to get the chance? In the first place not one candidate for Orders in a hundred is told that he requires any tuition in the management of the voice. Some clergymen know their own shortcomings as elocutionists; the majority never give the matter a thought. The subject is never mentioned at school or college, and in spite of our boasted spread of education the man who receives an orator's training is one in a thousand.

In the next place there is much difficulty in get-

ting elocutionary training. There are but few people who are competent to instruct. This is natural enough, as the demand for such instruction is made almost entirely by actors and actresses. They do not make the mistake of using their voices before the public without previous training. Then the fees required by the few professors of elocution to be found, are rather heavy and beyond the means of most of the clergy; while, again, some who wish for the instruction, and could afford the fees, live in places where it is impossible to find a good teacher.

There is, moreover, a prejudice among the clergy, but not so much among modern curates, against professors of elocution. It is said that men who learn how to speak become theatrical preachers; that speaking from the pulpit is a totally different thing to speaking on the stage (alas! it is); and a lot of nonsense is talked about the Apostles never having had lessons in elocution. This foolish prejudice will in time die out There have been but few instances to justify the theatrical argument, and it is absurd to say that a preacher should not be as good an elocutionist as an actor. As for the argument about the Apostles, none but an idiot would use it. No one wants lessons in

elocution more than the modern curate, especially in such times as the present. There never was a time in the history of our Church when it was more necessary for the clergy, and especially the young clergy, to be good preachers. "It is commonly said," as Sydney Smith complained, "that a clergyman is to recommend himself, not by his eloquence, but by the purity of his life and the soundness of his doctrine, a statement good enough if any connection could be pointed out between eloquence, heresy, and dissipation, but if it is possible for a man to live well, preach well, and teach well at the same time, such statements resting upon a supposed incompatibility of these good qualities are duller than the dulness they defend." If there is a prejudice against the clergy being taught how to speak by those who instruct our actors, how is it that our Universities and Theological Colleges do not provide competent elocutionists to teach the art in which Englishmen are so far behind the times? The answer is because the need has not yet been recognised, and because candidates for Orders have, in modern days, been discouraged from going to professors of elocution A learned Cambridge Don said on this subject, "That to repair to some professor of elocution, he often a

stage player, for rules by which to govern the voice and attitude in the House of God, seems so likely to begin in foppery or to end in it, that I confess it would take a great deal of substantial merit in the man and the minister to divert my mind, at least were I one of his flock, from the offensive associations such a proceeding would connect with him." When College authorities air their bigotry and prejudices in this manner we cannot see much hope of the Universities adding elocution to their curriculum for would-be preachers. But as the old fashioned prejudices against the stage and everybody connected with it are happily dying out, there is some chance that the invaluable assistance of theatrical professors of elocution will be sought in future by those clergy who are fortunate enough to be able to obtain it. The complaints about sermons as regards delivery, as well as matter, are so constant now that the Church cannot afford to disregard them. "It is not too much to assert," says Sergeant Cox, in his work on Speaking, "that forty-nine sermons out of fifty are prosy, inartistic, unattractive to mind or ear, drawling and slumberous, droning out dreary platitudes in dullest language, unenlivened by a flash of eloquence or a spark of poetry." But

for these "forty-nine sermons," and also for what the same writer calls "the pulpit drawl, the pulpit whine, the pulpit groan, and the pulpit snivel," the modern curate is only partially responsible. The majority of these uninteresting preachers are to be found among the beneficed clergy and the ancient curates who were ordained before the new order of services came into use. The modern curate, as a rule, is a better and a more popular preacher than his prototype of fifty years ago. There are many reasons why this should be so.

In the days when the Church was asleep, when pews contained arm chairs, high backs, and comfortable corners, when hat-and-bonnet choirs were the rule and not the exception, when the services were long and dreary, and when the Communion was administered but once a month, people as a rule went to sleep during the sermon. Consequently they cared very little what it was about. It was not the fashion to listen and criticise sermons. As long as the parson stood in the pulpit, and read or talked for half-an-hour, he did his duty; as long as his flock sat patiently in the pews during the performance they did their duty. This style of thing will not do for the present generation. Churches have ceased to be Sunday dor-

mitories. People listen to sermons, and grumble if they are too long and uninteresting, and very frequently desert the church where such discourses are the rule. The modern curate, unless he belongs to the extreme Low Church party, acts in accordance with the spirit of the times, preaches short sermons, and, to the best of his ability, strives to make them interesting. He recognises the fact that a sermon can be short. The old style of preachers would not allow this. Their theory was that no man could do justice to his text under half-an-hour. Of course on special occasions and for special subjects a long sermon is necessary now, but modern churchgoers will not tolerate long sermons as their spiritual pabulum every Sunday in the year from the same preacher It must be taken into consideration, even by the clergy, that the present age requires conciseness. Leading articles in papers are brief. The most popular stories are those which begin and end in the same number of the periodical in which they appear As a lecturer at the Royal Institution said, when speaking on "Life at High Pressure," "The most salient characteristic of life in the latter portion of the nineteenth century is its speed. We have got into the habit of valuing speed as

speed." Whether this is the result of railway travelling, as some think, or whether it is owing to other causes is a matter of small moment. We have to deal now with men as we find them. If the present generation suffer from a "chronic disturbance of the nervous system" as the result of this high pressure, which makes it physically impossible for them to sit out long services and hear long sermons on the only day of rest, it is high time the clergy recognised the fact, and not only shortened their sermons, but followed the excellent example of certain clergymen, and shortened their services also. The modern curate can and does do his best towards the necessary reform in the matter of sermons, but as regards shortening the services he is powerless. When the modern curates who hold sensible views on this subject become the rectors and vicars of our parishes, there is no doubt that steps will be taken to alter the present antiquated arrangement of the Prayer Book services. A curate has little or no voice in the matter of the services at his church. He can only suggest, and if his vicar does not hold the same views, the suggestions are not acted upon, and things remain in *statu quo*.

In the composition of his sermons the modern

curate has many advantages which did not exist for his predecessors a few years ago. In the first place, cheap printing has placed within his reach many valuable books on Theology, as well as many fine sermons of eminent preachers for his study. In the next place, he can get, if he wishes, direct assistance from the Homiletical Society, and from such books as the well-known four little thin volumes of Sermon Notes by the Rev. Edward Vaux. Manuals of anecdotes, dictionaries of illustrations, *excerpta* from the best writers, are published to aid the preacher, and the Church Homiletical Society publish a magazine especially for the assistance of the clergy, besides undertaking to criticise anonymously all the sermons which their subscribers may care to send.

The only fault to be found with this arrangement is, that the critics almost entirely belong to the Low Church party, so that curates of the High Church school do not find the criticisms as useful as they might be. With regard to the introduction of anecdotes and illustrations in sermons, it is acknowledged now that such aids to keeping the attention are most useful, and should be used by all preachers. Many of the clergy, especially the incumbents, are prejudiced against such a method

of securing attentive congregations. They cannot give any reason why a clergyman should not tell a suitable anecdote from the pulpit; they cannot deny that people, as a rule, like to hear a story in a sermon, yet their prejudices are so strong that nothing will convince them that such a style of preaching is the most Scriptural and the most useful. The modern curate does not share these prejudices. There may be some exceptions of course, but, generally speaking, those young curates who do not use anecdote and illustrations in their sermons are men who do not take the trouble to find them, or who do not know how to use them when they have found them.

In his "Thoughts on Preaching," the Rev. Daniel Moore asks, "Why have we such a pious shrinking from the introduction into a sermon of a pertinent and telling anecdote? Why are we afraid to quote now and then some of the pungent and sparkling illustrations of the old Puritan divines? That these antipathies are of modern growth there is no doubt.' Happily for their congregations the rising generation of preachers do not feel this pious shrinking. There is no doubt that much of the prejudice which exists among the clergy against the illustrative style of preaching

is owing to the abuse of it by Dissenters and eccentric clergymen. The eccentricities of Mr. Spurgeon and his imitators are naturally enough condemned by all who have any pretensions to good taste, but still they need not deter men of gentlemanly feeling from using the same method while avoiding the objectionable manner. The preacher who "courts a grin," or disgusts his hearers by irreverent expressions, is, however, never found among the educated gentlemen who hold curacies in our Church.

The great obstacle, perhaps, in the way of the modern curate becoming a good preacher is the fact that he is obliged to write a sermon every week during the two years which he is expected to spend in his first curacy. Very often he is obliged to prepare two sermons for each Sunday. "It must be a terrible thing," said Mr. Bright a year or two ago, "to have to read or speak a sermon every week on the same topic, to the same people; men of great mind, of great knowledge and power, can hardly do this with success. I wonder that any man can do it. I often doubt if any man has ever done it." This is the opinion of one of our greatest orators. So we may well ask, "How can a curate, with his inexperience, and unfinished

theological education, be expected to prepare one good sermon, much less two, every week?" The wonder is that the modern curate manages to get through his plethora of preaching as well as he does. He has, it is true, much assistance, as already mentioned, but no amount of assistance will take the place of practical experience and a thorough course of reading. There is far too much preaching in the present day. It would be much better both for the clergy and their congregations if the number of weekly sermons were considerably reduced. It is very certain, however, that the number of the young curate's sermons should be lessened. The Church now expects too much from her untried servants, and then blames them if their sermons are lacking in force and originality. If the modern Curate is expected to preach as often and as well as men who have graduated in sermon writing, he ought to be not only allowed, but expected to preach other men's sermons at stated intervals. "Many and many a congregation would cheerfully make allowance for a young man, when overpressed with work, and listen to him as he reads to them out of a book boldly, but he should let them see that he did so, and state his reasons." This excellent advice was given in a

recent number of the *Literary Churchman*, but it is advice which the modern curate cannot follow. The man who continued to act on this suggestion would be a marked man, and would be set down as being too lazy to write his own sermons. "If your situation requires a sermon every Sunday," said Paley, lecturing to theological students, "make one and steal five." Much better make one and openly borrow five. Addison, after commending the practice of Sir Roger de Coverley's chaplain, who used other men's sermons without concealment, said, "I heartily wish that more clergymen would follow this example." It has been objected, however, that if a man openly used another's sermons he would become "the advertiser of his own imcompetency." But, with regard to a young curate, this is a very feeble objection, for no reasonable people can expect him to be fully competent to write a good sermon every week for the first two or three years of his ministry. It is high time that this question of the modern curate's sermons received more consideration, and it would be as well, too, if a more constant interchange of pulpits between the young clergy of neighbouring parishes could be established. This simple plan could be made the means of saving a deacon or a

young priest the laborious composition of many a sermon. Under the present ridiculous system of exclusiveness a curate may live for years in a place without ever preaching a sermon in one of the neighbouring churches of his district. The clergy of the Church of England are much too fond of sticking to their own pulpits. It would be much better for them, their congregations, and their curates if they made a regular system of pulpit exchange with the neighbouring clergy. How easily this could be done, for instance, in towns and their suburbs where churches are so close together! Such a system would do more than reduce the number, and so improve the quality, of a clergyman's sermons; it would tend to bring the clergy together, and promote that social intercourse between them which is so desirable. At present the clergy do not fraternise with one another as much as they might, and the Church gains nothing by this exclusiveness. In these revolutionary times, when the Church has so many enemies among the Dissenters, Agnostics, Materialists, and others who are clamouring for her Disestablishment, no means should be neglected which may tend to strengthen her power and influence over the people. Short, bright services, good music,

and short pithy sermons are wanted in every church in the land, as well as a body of clergy who will work more harmoniously together, and not damage their influence by miserable squabbles about vestments, crosses, and candlesticks.

VI.

THE MODERN CURATE.

HIS MISERABLE PROSPECTS.

"HOPE," says the poet "springs eternal in the human breast." It is well for the Church that it does, or there would soon be a very marked falling-off in the number of candidates for Holy Orders. Young men who know anything at all about life must be well aware that numbers of those who become curates in the pay of the Church are destined to remain curates to the end of their lives. But every man who determines to become a clergyman prepares for deacon's Orders with the hope of some day having a church of his own, with a fair income. There may be some few exceptions to this rule, as in the case of those men with private means, who intend to devote themselves to scholastic work, or get appointments as army or navy chaplains. There must be very few

curates indeed, if there are any, who are quite reconciled to the prospect of remaining curates as long as they live. It is characteristic of Englishmen to appreciate fully "the glorious privilege of being independent."

It may be said, then, without much fear of contradiction that every man who takes Orders cherishes the hope that he will be one of the fortunate few selected for promotion before the best part of his life is over. But it would be impossible to tell how many good men give up all idea of becoming clergymen, because of the uncertainty of promotion in the Church. Hope is, no doubt, a vigorous principle, still there are many men who think with Haliburton that "Hope is not the man for your banker, though he may do for your travelling companion." If a curate has no interest, no living in store for him, or no means wherewith to purchase one, he must take his chance of promotion with all the other clergy similarly situated to himself. What is this chance?

In the present century the number of clergy has increased from about 12,000 to nearly 24,000. The number of benefices has increased from 11,065 in 1801 to about 13,742 at the present time. In the Report of the Curates' Augmenta-

tion Fund for the year 1878, we read that "Neither in number nor value has any reasonable proportion been maintained between the increase in the number of benefices to which they can look for maintenance; and the injurious way in which this has affected the position of many of the clergy is shown by the fact that no less than 247 charities exist for their relief . . . . Lord Hatherly states that for 127 pieces of preferment to which he had to appoint as Lord Chancellor, and half of which were of less value than 150*l.* he had nearly *three thousand* applications, and that some of the letters which he received were 'heartrending.'"

This state of affairs does not hold out much hope of preferment to the modern curate who has neither interest or sufficient private income to purchase a benefice. Who can wonder, then, if men with talents and good education decline to become the servants of a Church which gives them plenty of hard work, pays them a miserable wage for doing it, and when they are beyond work leaves them "as mendicants in the eye of the nation?" It has been said on the highest authority that those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. In this age of religious toleration, of church-building and church-going, those who

preach the Gospel may starve, and do starve, while the crowds who throng our churches at Fashion's bidding, care nothing and do nothing to improve their position There is no exaggeration in this statement. As the Bishop of Lincoln said not long ago, "It is a lamentable thing that the clergy of England, of this great and wealthy nation, should, after their long tried services to their country be reduced to stand as beggars by the wayside, like the veteran warrior of the East, neglected in his old age, after his many victories, by a haughty master and ungrateful people, and with head bare and hoary beard, leaning on his staff amid the trophies of his conquests, breathing out a pitiable prayer—'Date obolum Belisario.'"

Among the clergy who receive a grant of 50*l.* from the Curates' Augmentation Fund is a man who has been a curate for forty-seven years. He is working among a shipping population of 20,000. His vicar writes of him as being "thoroughly devoted to his ministerial work, diligent and faithful in pastoral intercourse among the poor." 'The Church pays this well-tried servant 105*l.* a year, without providing him with house or furnished rooms! When money was being subscribed for the Bishopric of Southwell an article appeared

in a provincial paper, in which the writer said, "I know of one poor struggling clergyman possessed of a so-called 'living' who has died of simple starvation and poverty." . . Take another case. A gentleman met a clergyman in Derbyshire. "Why ——," said he, "how ill you look?" The poor parson burst into tears. The want for years of sufficient food, of suitable clothing, and of everything that makes life pleasant, had at last unmanned him, and a kind word broke him down. The very same man asked a brother clergyman to let him visit a farmer whose residence was on the outskirts of his friend's parish, and the reason he gave was that when he went there the yeoman gave him some bread and cheese and a glass of beer!

The clergy are not the kind of men to parade their sufferings before the eyes of the world, or the laity would hear far more than they do of the misery and poverty which blights the lives of many of them. There are men holding livings whose incomes do not exceed 130*l.* per annum! Thus if a curate gets a church of his own he may have to sacrifice 20*l.* a year, or even more, for his independence, which means more work, anxiety, and responsibility. It is a poor prospect truly, which

the Church holds out to the majority of those men who devote their lives to her service. If curates without means keep from making foolish marriages with penniless girls, remain single, and never get the offer of livings worth having, they may work till sickness or old age renders them incapable of taking duty; then they must starve, or live as paupers on the bounty of strangers, if they have no friends to give them a home and a deathbed. Their stipends seldom exceed 150*l.* per annum, and in many cases curates find that, as they grow older, they get smaller stipends if they change their curacies. They cannot save a farthing so as to provide for old age. The best thing that can happen to them is to die in harness They may get grants from the Curates' Augmentation Fund after fifteen years' service, but as there are 1,100 curates whose length of service exceeds fifteen years, out of whom the Council of the Fund can only make grants to 267, this assistance cannot at present be relied upon. The Society for increasing the Stipends of Assistant Curates was inaugurated in 1866, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but it has been and is very badly supported. As I said in the first paper, "there is no fund nor any disposition to provide one to

increase the curate's meagre pittance." To remedy this evil to some extent, the Society in question was started with the idea of increasing the stipends of the elder curates This can only be done partially, owing to the difficulty which the Society finds in getting incumbents to allow sermons to be preached and collections made in aid of their fund, and also, as the Report for 1878 says, "to the *vis inertiæ* on the part of the great body of English Churchmen, arising partly from an absence of an adequate appreciation of the merits of the case, and partly from an undefined feeling that if the present state of things is not quite satisfactory, it may safely be left to right itself in time." But another very serious obstacle in the way of the Society's success is the name "Augmentation Fund." A more inappropriate name could not possibly have been chosen, as everyone naturally thinks the object of the Society is to increase the number of curates. In their report for 1878 it is admitted that one difficulty the Society has to contend with is "the mistaken notion so generally entertained that the work of the Curates' Augmentation Fund is identical with that of the Additional Curates' Society." Yet the same misleading name is retained! When the idea of

collecting a fund to increase the stipends of tried curates was approved by so many nobles, bishops, and others, common sense should have suggested some name which could not possibly have been misunderstood. The sooner the present ridiculous name is altered the better it will be for the curates concerned.

But if the Curates' Augmentation Fund were large enough to give every curate an addition of 50*l.* a year to his income after fifteen years' service, the fact would not do much to encourage good men to take Orders. Fifteen years is a long time to wait for such a poor increase of stipend, especially when there is no prospect of further increase. A fund is wanted to give a progressive increase of stipend to curates without private means, provided they deserve it, and do not marry penniless girls. This may seem a strange proviso to suggest, but nothing should be done to encourage foolish curates to imitate the criminal folly of those clergymen who have been and are obliged to seek the aid of the Poor Clergy Relief Corporation. The subject of these wretched marriages has already been treated, but they cannot be too often or too strongly condemned If poor curates are not fortunate enough to find wives who have

money sufficient to clothe, feed, and educate their children, they are worse than fools if they marry. It would be utterly impossible to describe the misery caused by the frequent pauper marriages of the clergy In the last report issued by the Poor Clergy Relief Corporation there is the usual statement of cases, and some extracts are given from the three hundred and fifty-six cases relieved by pecuniary grants. One or two may be quoted to show the result of marrying on curate's pay, or the income of a poor living. "An incumbent, forty-four years of age, fifteen years in orders, married, seven children, all under eleven years of age. Sole income, 130*l.* per annum. The cause of the present application: the applicant is suffering, and has been suffering more or less for the last two years, from nervous depression. He has lately had another attack, and his medical man has recommended him to take a voyage. The Corporation granted 15*l.*" Another case is that of "a curate, seventy-three years of age, forty-eight years in Orders; whose sole income is 80*l.* per annum!" One of his references writes: "He is ill in one room, his wife in another, and there are two invalid grown-up children, who can do nothing for themselves. The Corporation granted 30*l.*"

So case after case might be mentioned of clergymen in all parts of the country actually starving with their families, of clergymen's widows and children left utterly destitute, and all obliged to appeal as paupers for pecuniary grants and cast-off clothing Yet there are men and women ready to defend these unwise marriages between poor clergy and poor women! Parents and guardians allow silly, love-sick girls to marry curates who have neither money, common sense, nor knowledge of the world, and the result is utter misery for them and their unfortunate children. Numbers of applications for relief are made to the "Poor Clergy Relief Corporation" on behalf of the widows and children of clergymen who have died and left them paupers. It is impossible to understand how men can bring themselves to think that they are showing their love for the women who listen to their vows, by deliberately placing them in a position of life in which they must suffer all the indescribable miseries of one of the worst forms of poverty. Celibacy is not desirable for the clergy. There can be no two opinions on the subject, but of two evils, celibacy or pauper clergymen's families, the former is decidedly the lesser evil.

It is, of course, easy enough to point out evils; but it is by no means so easy to suggest practical remedies. Still in the present state of affairs voluntary celibacy seems to be the only remedy for the evil which the Clergy Relief Societies strive to alleviate. If the clergy ceased to make improvident marriages, the funds which are used to lessen the miserable evils attendant upon their folly, might be given to improve the position of underpaid incumbents and curates. As it is, a large sum of money has to be collected every year to support the families of men who marry without a prospect of providing sufficient food and clothing for their unfortunate children.

It is often said that a curate's pay is far higher now than it was some few years ago, when 80*l.* a year was the average stipend, and that curates are, consequently, much better off than they were; but people who say this forget that furnished rooms and all the necessaries of life are far more expensive now than they were before the introduction of railways. The average stipend of Modern Curates is under 130*l.* a year, which is no more than an equivalent of the amount given when 80*l.* was the curate's pay. This may be just enough to enable a careful bachelor "to keep the wolf from

the door," but it is not sufficient to entice the men who have brains and energy enough to make their way in the more lucrative professions It is all very well to quote the now hackneyed saying, that a young man should devote his life to the work of the ministry, and think nothing of his pay, but be ready to toil through life for wages that no skilled mechanic would take. What is the use of talking of "what men should do?" We have to deal with facts, and it is an undisputed fact, that talented young men with University degrees are lost to the Church, because their own common sense and their parents' advice deter them from taking Holy Orders under the existing system of Church preferment, with a possibility of receiving no more than a curate's paltry stipend for life! Owing also to the miserable stipends which curates get, numbers of talented men who have taken Orders are lost to the Church. There are clergymen living now who have given up clerical work entirely, either for literature or tuition—men who might have been made useful parish priests, had the Church paid them better.

It is often said that there are no remedies for these evils. This is not the case altogether. Much might be done if proper steps were taken to

hold out a higher prospect to young men willing to become clergymen. The purchase of livings should be made impossible, so that men without money should have the same chance of preferment as their rich brothers. Private patrons should never be allowed to present relatives or friends to livings, unless the Bishops of the Diocese could be thoroughly satisfied that the selected men were the best from every point of view for the vacant posts. The Bishops themselves are not entirely free from the charge of nepotism. To stop this evil the laity should take the matter into their own hands, and refuse to accept clergymen as their parish priests unless they are satisfied with the Bishop's choice. A congregation, for instance, accustomed to the High Church Ritual, should not be condemned to put up with the teaching and ritual of an Evangelical parson, just because he happens to be a friend of a bishop.

In fact, the laity of the Church of England alone have the power to improve the condition of the Modern Curate, and ensure their Church being served by an efficient staff of well-educated gentlemen. The money which is wanted to secure the services of good men must come from their pockets, and if they are not willing to give far more generously

than they do now, they must not grumble if they find the tone of their clergy plainly deteriorating. If good men are worth having they are worth fair pay. The clergy now do not get fair pay. It is, moreover, a disgrace to the laity, that clergy with small incomes should have to pay their own curates; it is a greater disgrace that in many places the laity will not give their pastor the services of a curate when they know well he wants help but cannot afford to pay for it out of his own miserable stipend. But of course we must bear in mind that the Christianity of thousands of our church-goers is like much that is modern—mere sham, otherwise they would support their clergy better, and not allow the whole world to witness the spectacle of a pauper staff of clergy ministering to the spiritual wants of the wealthiest nation on earth.

THE END.